



Hagerstown Church of the Brethren

March 5, 2025

7:00 PM

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
Hagerstown, Maryland

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

7:00 PM

March 5, 2025

WELCOME

PRELUDE “Meditation on Penitence” (Paxton)

CALL TO WORSHIP Christopher Stockslager, Worship Leader

One: Turn away from the calls of worldly success

All: Repent, and turn back to God.

One: Turn away from the desire to have what everyone else has

All: Repent, and turn back to God.

One: Turn away from greed and the race for power

All: Repent, and turn back to God.

One: As we enter Lent, may we turn back to God

All: May we seek forgiveness, may we seek healing, may we seek wholeness. May our hearts be renewed in this time of worship.

OPENING PRAYER

HYMN #145 “There’s a wideness in God’s mercy”

[Verse 1]

There’s a wideness in God’s mercy, like the wideness of the sea. There’s a kindness in God’s justice, which is more than liberty.

[Verse 2]

There is a welcome for the sinner, and more graces for the good. There is a mercy with the Savior, there is a healing in his blood.

[Verse 3]

But we make God’s love too narrow by false limits of our own, and we magnify the strictness with a zeal God will not own.

[Verse 4]

For the love of God is broader than the measures of the mind, and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.

[Verse 5]

If our love were but more simple we should rest upon God’s word, and our lives would be illumined by the presence of our Lord.

SCRIPTURE READING Psalm 51 (The Message)

Generous in love—God, give grace! Huge in mercy—wipe out my bad record. Scrub away my guilt, soak out my sins in your laundry. I know how bad I’ve been; my sins are staring me down. You’re the One I’ve violated, and you’ve seen it all, seen the full extent of my evil. You have all the facts before you; whatever you decide about me is fair. I’ve been out of step with you for a long time, in the wrong since before I was born. What you’re after is truth from the inside out. Enter me, then; conceive a new, true life. Soak me in your laundry and I’ll come out clean, scrub me and I’ll have a snow-white life. Tune me in to foot-tapping songs, set these once-broken bones to dancing. Don’t look too close for blemishes, give me a clean bill of health. God, make a fresh start in me, shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my life. Don’t throw me out with the trash, or fail to breathe holiness in me. Bring me back from gray exile, put a fresh wind in my sails! Give me a job teaching rebels your ways so the lost can find their way home. Commute my death sentence, God, my salvation God, and I’ll sing anthems to your life-giving ways. Unbutton my lips, dear God; I’ll let loose with your praise. Going through the motions doesn’t please you, a flawless performance is nothing to you. I learned God-worship when my pride was shattered. Heart-shattered lives ready for love don’t for a moment escape God’s notice.

ANTHEM “Just As I Am” (Martin)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: On this first day of Lent we pause, look within and examine our consciousness.

All: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

One: Where we have neglected prayer, been apathetic in worship, found reasons to avoid generosity, or lacked compassion:

All: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

One: Where we have colluded in the oppression of those who become invisible in their suffering, and ignored on the streets:

All: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

One: Where anxiety has eroded the gift of Your peace, and where we have cared too much about what others think:

All: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

Words of assurance:

As Lent begins, know that God understands how we struggle to stay open and compassionate. The invitation is not to focus on our inadequacies,

but on God's gift of grace and love which transforms our hearts and minds. That gift is given to us again, here and now. Be encouraged. Amen.

EPISTLE READING 2 Corinthians 5:20 – 6:10 (The Message)

Because of this decision we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don't look at him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life emerges! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you.

How? you ask. In Christ. God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God.

Staying at Our Post

6 1-10 Companions as we are in this work with you, we beg you, please don't squander one bit of this marvelous life God has given us. God reminds us, I heard your call in the nick of time; The day you needed me, I was there to help.

Well, now is the right time to listen, the day to be helped. Don't put it off; don't frustrate God's work by showing up late, throwing a question mark over everything we're doing. Our work as God's servants gets validated—or not—in the details. People are watching us as we stay at our post, alertly, unswervingly . . . in hard times, tough times, bad times; when we're beaten up, jailed, and mobbed; working hard, working late, working without eating; with pure heart, clear head, steady hand; in gentleness, holiness, and honest love; when we're telling the truth, and when God's showing his power; when we're doing our best setting things right; when we're praised, and when we're blamed; slandered, and honored; true to our word, though distrusted; ignored by the world, but recognized by God; terrifically alive, though rumored to be dead; beaten within an inch of our lives, but refusing to die; immersed in tears, yet always filled with deep joy; living on handouts, yet enriching many; having nothing, having it all.

HYMN #522

"My Jesus, I love thee"

[Verse 1]

My Jesus I love Thee, I know Thou art mine. For Thee all the follies of sin I resign. My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou. If ever I loved Thee my Jesus 'tis now

[Verse 2]

I love Thee because Thou has first loved me, and purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree. I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow. If ever I loved Thee my Jesus 'tis now

[Verse 3]

In mansions of glory and endless delight I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright. I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow. If ever I loved Thee my Jesus 'tis now.

UNISON PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, pierce my soul with your love so that I may always long for you alone, who are the bread of angels and the fulfillment of the soul's deepest desires.

May my heart always hunger and feed on you, so that my soul may be filled with sweetness in your presence.

May my soul thirst for you, who are the source of life, wisdom, knowledge, light and all the riches of God our Father.

May I always seek and find you, think about you, speak to you and do everything for the honour and glory of your name.

Be always my hope, my peace, my refuge and help in whom my heart is rooted so that I may never separate from you.

INTRODUCTION TO THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Those who wish may now come forward and receive the mark of these ashes as a sign of your repentance and total dependence upon God. All are welcome to come forward to receive ashes at this time – either on your forehead or the back of your hand.

PRAYER

***HYMN #533**

"Jesus, my Lord, my God, my all"

[Verse 1]

*Jesus, my Lord, my God, my all, hear me, bless'd Savior, when I call.
Hear me, and from thy dwelling place pour down the riches of thy grace.
Jesus, my Lord, I thee adore. Oh, may I love thee more and more.*

[Verse 2]

*Jesus, too late I thee have sought. How can I love thee as I ought?
And how extol thy matchless fame, the glorious beauty of thy name?
Jesus, my Lord, I thee adore. Oh, may I love thee more and more.*

[Verse 3]

*Jesus, what didst thou find in me that thou hast dealt so lovingly?
How great the joy that thou hast brought! Oh, far exceeding hope or thought!
Jesus, my Lord, I thee adore. Oh, may I love thee more and more.*

[Verse 4]

*Jesus, of thee shall be my song. To thee my heart and soul belong. All that I am
or have is thine, and thou, my Savior, thou art mine.
Jesus, my Lord, I thee adore. Oh, may I love thee more and more.*

***SENDING**

(by Ann Siddall)

In the footsteps of centuries of pilgrims,
go now to embark on your Lenten journey.
Consider how you may simplify your days,
so that you may travel lightly.
Be alert to all that could side-track you:
notice that which beckons alluringly,
or with apparently greater urgency,
than the pilgrim journey Christ invites.
Do not try to cover
more than one good day's journey at a time.
Know when to stop for food and sleep,
so that the journey will not be too great for you.
Walk humbly, knowing that the goal
is not recognition, achievement or reward,
but simply to have come to know Christ
and yourself more intimately.
Be on the lookout for other pilgrims,
caring for those who limp, or fall;
those who cannot see the way forward:
pilgrimage is richer in community.

Go now: place your hand
into the outstretched hand of Jesus Christ,
allow the words of the story to guide you,
and pray for purity of heart and mind. **Amen.**

POSTLUDE

*Please be seated and use these moments during the postlude for a time of
reflection. Burton will be playing...*

"To You, O Lord I Call"

(Powell)